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GUIDELINES FOR CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

DISCOVERING CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

A. Paul Dominic

GUIDELINES FOR CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

Felix Podimattam

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JEEVADHARA

The Fullness of Life

GUIDELINES FOR CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

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THE FULNESS OF LIFE

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	409
Discovering Celibate Friendship <i>A Paul Dominic</i>	411
Guidelines for Celibate Friendship <i>Felix Podimattam</i>	426

Editorial

The Bible teaches that God is love and that Christ is the manifestation of God's love to us. Christ's mission is to make us capable of loving God and our brethren as He loves us. Therefore it is natural that love should be the driving force and the mainspring of man's life. The most important task of a Christian is to strengthen love in himself and in others. God expects him to love wholly and effectively. To paraphrase St. Irenaeus' words, "the glory of God is man fully alive" with love. Christ came to give us abundant life. It is through love of Him and of one another that we can share in this abundant life.

The most important thing in human life is love at all levels including heterosexual love. It is such a love that brings about fulfilment in human life. This love should not be sacrificed under the pretext of safeguarding consecrated celibacy. Consecrated celibacy is a gift that God gives to a person in order to enable him to give himself more fully in loving than he could ever have done without this gift.

Fundamentally, God offers the same vocation to both the married and the celibate. Both have to give themselves unreservedly to generous loving. For a healthy and fulfilling life, whether in marriage or in celibacy, the same human affections and emotions are needed. The fulfilling aspect of marriage is obvious enough to all. But unfortunately, the same is not true of celibacy because of the exaggerated emphasis of manualistic theology on its renunciatory and sacrificial aspects. A life of celibacy certainly means the renunciation of many human joys. But there are many other joys in such a life that are generally not known to married people. A celibate is called to be a master in the art of loving. If a celibate has not understood the mystery of love, he has not understood the true meaning of his celibacy.

The Church most certainly desires the happiness of her consecrated children. If we do not wish our priests and religious

to be discontented and frustrated persons, it is imperative that we highlight the positive and joy-giving aspects of celibate life by giving human love its due place. If consecrated celibacy is to continue as a relevant and attractive way of life, as it should, we must be able to show that it is a state of life which caters plentifully also to the human emotional needs for love and acceptance. If we cannot do this, we should not complain if celibates seek to satisfy these legitimate needs outside consecrated life. A change of mentality in this regard is very much needed today in order to create a challenging and inspiring atmosphere where opportunities are available for genuine friendships.

The number of men and women celibates who are cultivating deep heterosexual friendships has been constantly on the increase over the past years. Yet we do not have a proper theology of guidelines for this kind of friendship. Very little has been published as to how to go about in the cultivation of heterosexual friendship in celibate life. Meanwhile there is a needless loss of celibate vocations owing to ignorance and lack of guidance in this delicate area. Ignorance and imprudence have led many to leap into situations they were not prepared to cope with. Pastoral experience shows that the lives of some celibates have been destroyed by close heterosexual friendships, while those of many others have been enriched by them. Those who try to face the question of heterosexual friendship in their lives are often left without help. They doubt whether they are on the right track with regard to their friendships. These people need guidance and often they have nowhere to turn for advice. We hope that for such people this issue of *Jeevadhara* will be a source of enlightenment and support. We have tried to discuss frankly the conditions in which heterosexual celibate friendships can thrive fruitfully.

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Discovering Celibate Friendship

The tension in religious life

Religious life is in a number of ways a life of tension. One reason for the tension is the desire to do something good which however is left undone or done only with a certain loss of peace because of certain regulations that have come to prevail in religious life. Some conscientious religious, for instance, scruple to help the poor in any small way without the permission of the superior; but knowing the superior's refusal in such and such a case, and being moved at the same time by compassion in the present case, they yield to the 'temptation' of giving away something to the needy person, only to have a scruple about it afterwards. In the heart of hearts they know that they have not done anything wrong; and yet they cannot deny that they have an uneasy conscience. They are not sure that they have offended the good Lord, who even said: '... in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me' (Mt 25:40); but they are cocksure about the violation of their clear-cut rules and so feel slightly guilty about it. Of the many other such causes for tension in religious life, what is perhaps least suspected is the most productive of tension; and that is love. Love is a much abused word in religion as in the outside world. I have seen in a convent a placard proclaiming to the visitor that theirs is the congregation founded solely on love; but certainly there love is not conspicuous, except, I am tempted to add, by its absence. To be truthful I must say at once that the placard bore the word charity, and not love!

The literature of religious life gives primacy to love and demands insistent practice of it. It would be interesting and revealing however to know the experience of love religious have in their actual life. One may dare ask them questions such as these: Do they have friends, close friends, special friends among

themselves? Do they take time to be intimate with them? In their absence do they—or, can they—miss them, communicate with them, send them a gift on occasion? Being more curious and personal one may insist on asking them if they have, or can have, friends outside their own religious group with persons of the opposite sex too; and if not, why not? It is a sad fact that not all religious will be able to answer affirmatively even the first set of questions, because of their particular brand of religious life and formation. Even those who enjoy friendship within their own congregation may well hesitate to answer the second set of questions. Perhaps they have never had an occasion to face such questions regarding heterosexual love of celibates. Those who have faced such questions in their life without fright or flight, would have experienced a tension in their life because of their apparently conflicting beliefs that love of anyone cannot be wrong according to the law of Jesus, and yet their gushing feeling of love cannot be right according to the rule of religious. This tension is well mirrored in a delightful modern myth:

Once-upon-a-time, not many years ago, there was a Sister who kept all the rules and tried hard to get others to keep them, too. This person felt that the rules were just for that, and only in keeping them could she hope that someday she would be able to leave this stern world and at last be happy somewhere else in a place called heaven...

One day what many would call a great temptation came her way. A young priest came to her parish, and she found him very attractive. He seemed to say to her by his actions and his words, "Love me". When she realized what he was saying to her, her answer was, "I can't love you. I love God. I must keep the rules to prove it". But he didn't go away. He just kept on saying, "Love me". You see, he loved *her*. And he wanted her to know it. So he kept coming back, saying in many different ways, "I love you. Love me". Until at last she said to him, "I'm afraid to love you. It's against the rules I have learned. I can see you aren't trying to take

me away from God, but you see, it's so hard to find a rule that will let me love you. Please help me".¹

This myth holds the mirror up to the inner questionings of many a heart awakened in the quietude of their religious life by the quickening of adult love.

This phenomenon is not only of our generation or century as even St. Teresa of Avila was acquainted with this problem. Many will be comforted in the struggle of their love by the assurance given by her:

If we act with moderation and discretion in our affections which are not wholly spiritual, everything will become meritorious and what seems to proceed from nature will become virtue..... Let us begin by practising this spiritual friendship (e. g. with the spiritual director) moderately, and even if a little natural affection becomes entwined, that will do no harm provided it is not exclusive. Of course, we shall certainly be told that a friendship of this kind is not necessary, that God alone suffices, but as regards myself I shall tell you if I am not in hell today, I owe it to friends of this kind.²

What St Teresa said reflectively and confidently and seriously about love, can be read even in the spontaneous and bold and humorous remark, 'Why deprive us of a chance to live with a man once a year at least!' made in public by a young vivacious sister in response to the suggestion of the retreat master to have sisters themselves conduct their retreats.

1. Sr M. McGriffin, "Middle Years and Celibacy", *Sisters Today* 1972, pp. 596-597.

2. Cf. P. Dion, *Sister's Vow of Chastity* (New York, 1966), pp. 88-90, cited by F. Podimattam, "The Theology of Celibate Friendship", *Jeevadhara* 1978, pp. 477-478.

Solution of the tension

Love as a human necessity

Abstracting from the heterosexual aspect in the tension of love experienced by religious³, we shall reflect first on love as such. If love is a deeply felt need of a human being, there must needs be some intrinsic necessity about it. In fact it answers the most basic problem of human existence. Human existence is characterized by the awareness, acutely felt, though not accurately perceived, of helplessness, aloneness and separateness; and this awareness gives rise to intense anxiety. A vivid picture of this experience is sketched in the story of the discovery of the nakedness of the primordial man and woman in the Bible. Every man and woman of every age and culture undergoes this experience from the age of puberty. Thus experience of aloneness is the existential problem of man which can be solved only by union. If the solution is to be personal, permanent and genuine, the union can be achieved only through love. Love is the human power that enables one to overcome one's anxiety of isolation and to become united with others, without however at the same time losing one's own identity or destroying the others', and to remain so always. Love therefore appears as the human necessity that rescues man from the calamitous isolated existence and leads him to interpersonal fusion. Love, which is the answer to the general problem of human existence, is bound to acquire a nuance when the human existence is seen in its sexual polarisation. Love will then be also union of the masculine and feminine poles. Love is therefore an integral part of the existential human necessity, as even the Biblical story of the creation of woman from man illustrates⁴. It is important here to observe at once that love between the sexes is not necessarily spousal love. Apart from the love bet-

3. This tension is something of a larger experience of all men and women. Cf. K. Gibran, *The Broken Wings* (London, 1970), p. 24, where Selma expresses her love for Gibran thus: "Now I feel the presence of something stranger and sweeter than brotherly affection, an unfamiliar commingling of love and fear that fills my heart with sorrow and happiness."

4. Cf. E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (London, 1978), pp. 14-16, 22, 24, 33.

ween mother and her sons as also between father and his daughters, even the adult love between man and woman can be just beautiful companionship.⁵ In fact the primary purpose of the creation of the two sexes is mutual companionship of love which should of course find its normal, though not absolutely necessary, climax in conjugal companionship. Eve herself was created for Adam not as his wife, but as his helpmate who in course of time became his spouse (cf. Gn 2:18-23, 25). Genuine spouses know that in their unique bond companionship is the element that is lasting and all-pervading. Also it is true to say that in general spousal love itself does not destroy the companionship of the spouses with other men and women.

Love as a psychological necessity

Man whose nature is bisexual, also exists bisexually. In other words the polarity of the double sex is found not only in human nature but is part of every individual person. This is true physiologically as well as psychologically. As man and woman have physiologically each one hormone of the opposite sex too, they possess in themselves the psychological principles of the male and female. Man therefore has the female principle of reception along with the male principle of penetration. Man will find union in his own person only in the union of the polarity of principles found in him. This internal psychological union that makes for a genuine person cannot be achieved without an actual encounter between the sexes. It is in meeting with the opposite sex that one recognizes the subordinate sexual principle in oneself and understands its function. If a man has not overcome his isolation by the union of love with a woman who is visible this need have no sexual connotation necessarily—he cannot integrate within himself the bisexual psychological principles which are elusive. Love between the sexes appears therefore as a psychological necessity also for his individual integral existence.⁶ I can recall the story of a priest, an able

5. Cf. I. Lepp, *The Authentic Morality* (New York, 1965), p. 180: "In reality what most characterizes the sexual impulse is its tendency to establish a profound existential bond with the other."

6. Cf. E. Fromm, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

administrator till past his age of retirement, all along a tireless worker who relaxed only to plunge into his work all the more dead seriously, to all appearance a stern and severe person, in his private life a man who kept women at arm's length, who lying in his sick bed in his last days of loneliness painfully and vehemently repeated to his priest friends: "We must have a wife!" He need not have undergone such a tragic experience. His desperate wish for a wife was not a sign that he blasphemously regretted his priesthood, but a cry arising from an acute awareness of his isolation from which he could not save himself as before by having recourse to benumbing work. Having fought shy of women consistently and having lived as if they did not exist, he never overcame the isolation of his being by entering into relationship of love with women; and consequently never managed to bring into union the twin sexual principles within himself. He let his male principle grow dominant, and his female principle lie dormant. Psychologically this had its backlash on him when he had little control over himself; and wrung from him those words of poignant longing that would never have flitted through his mind earlier.

Love as a spiritual necessity

Love between the sexes seen above as a human and psychological necessity, is also a spiritual necessity. This is based on the fact that our spiritual life which is the same as relationship with God, is very much dependent upon our relationship with people. The child looks upon God as a loving parent and this relationship is genuine. The adult, who has grown out of his childhood, cannot continue to regard God in the manner of a child. Even to his parents he relates himself no more as a small child. Therefore if his relationship with God is to be genuine he should approach God with his experience of an adult. A normal mature adult is one who has extended his relationship of love beyond home to men and women like him. The love of God comes to him now in and through this adult love also just as it once did in the parental love, so that now he can love God truly in return only in the maturity of his adult love. Just as adult experience of love leads one to the proper perception of God, it helps one to delve deeper into the mystery of God. For as adult friends grow in their bond of love, they delight in

revealing to each other their interior experiences with God and ponder together the spiritual consolations with gratitude and strain ahead for what the Lord will bestow on them. Adult friends of opposite sexes have something special to gain in their spiritual growth as a result of their mutual love. Since the male and female ways of relating to God are different heterosexual friends enrich each other in their mutual exchange by their individual sexual dimension that characterizes their dealings with God. As only a man can open to a woman certain aspects of the mystery of God and vice versa, both together grasp the mystery better than two friends of the same sex.⁷ If saints, like Francis de Sales and Frances de Chantal, could enjoy their heterosexual friendship one may suggest that they must have experienced it as a spiritual necessity.

Conviction about love

Rational faith

The triple necessity that love is does explain why sane and sensible celibates who fall in love, i. e. suddenly feel love for a person of the opposite sex, experience initially the spontaneous thrill of love though later they allow qualms of conscience to disturb their peace. The qualms of conscience are mostly fears about what others will say about their experience and not on the experience itself, and therefore cannot pronounce upon the experience itself; but their inner approval of their experience—that is what their thrill is—regards only the experience and nothing outside it and therefore can be a valid basis for discerning if it is good or bad. As already suggested, it must be considered good if one appreciates the fact that love is a three-fold necessity. Anyone who wants the glow of love in his life must be persuaded by this truth about love. He should set aside any trace of, what E. Fromm calls, irrational faith, i. e. acceptance of something as true simply following the mind of the authority or the majority. He should instead cultivate rational faith which is conviction rooted in one's own indubitable experience. Unlike irrational faith which relies solely on the

7. Cf. P. Hinnebusch, *Friendship in the Lord* (Notre Dame, 1974), pp. 77, 79-81.

opinion of others, rational faith rests on the firmness of one's own conviction based on one's basic insight and deep longing.⁸ Without this rational faith in the goodness and beauty of the heterosexual friendship of love the celibate friends of opposite sexes will ever remain on the threshold of love and never enter the domain of love itself which in fact is the fullness of life. What follows is a number of considerations on love that may well help celibate friends to develop their rational faith in their experience of love.

Human truth of celibate love

The first consideration may be called human. The love between two celibates of opposite sexes is not something to be looked askance at. It is just a human event for which there can be any number of reasons. In its initial stage it may well be the very first experience of human love; for not all have the experience of being loved at home, despite what good parents may say. Or it may be an experience in which they have the satisfaction of their human need for love. If so it is very much in the line of the many possible human relations in a normal home. A normal home opens itself out to genuine friendship with other men and women. It is very much unlike the self-absorbed home of Thérèse of Lisieux where a young priest went once in his youthful zeal only to find himself an intruder. What obtains in a normal healthy home in the matter of loving relationships of relatives and friends finds a genuine expression in celibate heterosexual friendships also. This may be a reason why at least some parents of celibate friends can understand and appreciate the celibate friendship of their children more readily than most religious superiors. In this context one may see the roots of the daring and enthusiastic view of Teilhard de Chardin on celibate friendship in his special love for his sister that opened out in intimacy to his cousin Marguerite and extended beyond the circle of relations to one Leontine Zanta. It is also tempting to apply here the promise Jesus makes to those who renounce their homes, of receiving back in abundance all that they cherished at home (cf. Mk 10:29-30). Though he is demanding in the matter of

8. Cf. E. Fromm, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-102

severing family ties that can be a hindrance to the urgency of the spread of the kingdom, he is divinely, and therefore perfectly, human enough to bestow on his followers away from home the gift of human love through the experience of friendships. It is unlike Jesus that religious are wanting in the sense of human touch. I remember an European priest telling the story of his sister nun who on her first visit to home would not let her younger brother kiss her because she was in a religious garb! People like this nun must relearn to love humanly as they first learnt at home before they can look upon celibate love between sexes without prejudice. If only celibates know what it is to be human and are themselves vibrantly human, are they in a position to grasp the human truth of celibate friendship.

Part of the human truth of celibate love is that love is not identical with sex. This must be understood not only notionally but really. In the minds of the worldly people love is sex; and sadly, it is not different in the minds of the old-time religious, though there is difference, to be sure, in the explanation of the identification. The worldly identification of love and sex means that love is the result of sex so that one can love only by having sex and the more sex one has the more love one enjoys. Such a culture of love is sheer sophistication of sex. But this is really disintegration of love. In some similar way love meets with the same fate in the world of strict, protective religious communities. Not many religious can look at the loving relationship of two celibates of opposite sexes for long with unsullied mind. Before long they will interpret it in only one way, the only way known to them, which cannot see anything but spousal relationship whenever a man and a woman come together and enjoy each other's company. They are cocksure that hetero-sexual love of celibates involves more or less some sexual play, or at least leads to the foul play sooner or later. The view of love implicit in such thinking is naive about sex. Here comes pat an amusing story of a middle aged religious priest who had grown with such a view. Once he saw a young companion of his surrounded by small boys and girls some of whom were holding his hands. Shocked at the sight of the closeness of the girls to the young man, he told him plainly and unashamedly, "You are touching girls!" The sane young man had his ready answer, "Father, these are not girls! these

are children!!" The priest was embarrassed but not convinced; and so as he went away he had his say: "But they will become girls!" Another priest frankly accused himself in the confessional of having kissed a small girl and added somewhat hesitantly that he did so out of affection. How sad it is that the priest could not enjoy the pure affection he felt for the little girl! A third story may be told that will make one boil with indignation. An old religious superior asked a young priest who had gone to see his friends in a convent for a few days where he slept in the convent! These are all events culled from the fiction of life; and many more can be added. These events betray an immature and warped idea of love and sex. The simplistic connection of love with sex is the bane of love. The mature conception of love will see sex as part of love and not the whole of love, so that love can have an existence of its own. Even the priest who cried for a wife in his bed of pain wanted only the love, i. e. the care and concern and consolation that a woman alone can give, which function incidentally characterizes the nurse. Realising this need of mere love in human life men and women religious must bear witness to the culture of love without the contamination of sex. Such a belief in the human truth of love itself will enable many a lonely priest to discover celibate love as a real solution to their problem. Also it will open up a real possibility for many a religious to find the much needed joy in their life.

Psychological power of love

The second consideration on love may be called psychological. Psychologists say that man has four basic emotions in common with animals: viz., happiness, fear, anger and sadness. Instead of happiness, however, we shall here speak of love, as love is the highest form of happiness in man and presumably also in animal. In animal kingdom everything is instinctual and therefore all the four emotions will have a balancing effect among themselves. One may really wonder if there is such a balance of emotions in man. If there is not, what is the emotion that holds man captive? Whatever it may be, it is certainly not love. This is generally true of all human life; and, a cynic may add, especially of religious life! If the other three emotions of fear, anger and sadness hold sway over man more than love,

they can only work out the destruction of man as they are all negative forces. Love alone is the affirmative force that posits, preserves and perfects life. What is more, it is the creative force that breathes forth freshness into life.⁹ Here the procreation of the love of a couple is not of so much interest to us as the psychic fact that in love each one of the lovers is reborn and made new. Friends who experience each other's love come to discover in themselves hidden talents that open out new possibilities to them. They realize each other's potentialities and bring them to their perfection. They bring out the best in each other and thus enjoy the celebration of life. They are persuaded that beauty is not so much in the eyes of the beholder as is created by the eyes of the loving beholder. They can appreciate what has been said of God's creative power of love: "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gn 1:31a). Needless to say, such an experience of love between friends will have a thrill of its own if the love is heterosexual, because such love is in unison with the sexual polarisation of man. Celibates have no reason to divest themselves of this power of life, which is love, and suffer the loss of life by the accumulation of fear, anger and sadness.

If the power of the emotion of love is to be effective it has to focus itself on specific persons. The idea of universal love is more a myth than a matter of fact. Love comes to us from particular individuals and goes out to concrete persons and does not embrace people *en masse*. A. Maslow, the psychologist, has pointed out that mature people do not enter into close friendship with many.¹⁰ It is part of the limitation of human nature that human love can reach out directly and intimately only to a few chosen friends. No one has the time, much less the emotional capacity, to share love with many. Even from among the near ones, with whom there is a natural bond of love, a person rightly chooses someone or other for a deeper sharing of love. Of God it may be said that he loves all universally and concretely; but it is not an apodictic experience for us. The incarnate God himself was bound up with just a few close friends. Human love is too precious to be distributed at

9. Cf. J. Pieper, *About Love* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 18-25.

10. Cf. P. Hinnebuseh, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

random. If we only realize that love is not only the foremost, but greatest gift one can make to another, we would be mindful to choose those who can respond to it. This however does not mean that our love is exhausted by our friends. This restricted love is really an enlarged egotism. True love does not exclude anyone, though it does not include everyone in its intimacy. Paradoxically genuine love for the few best friends results in love for all. As E. Fromm expresses it, "If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, 'I love you', I must be able to say, 'I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself'".¹¹ This makes sense of universal love, which however presupposes the love for a few intimates.

Spiritual insight into celibate friendship

The third consideration may be called spiritual. The spiritual necessity of love was already shown earlier. Here we shall make a reflection on the aspect of the intimacy of love. The mystery of the immanence of God in us reveals the intimacy of his love. This divine intimacy reaches us individually and concretely. A psalmist expresses this with much feeling:

It was you who created my inmost self,
and put me together in my mother's womb;
for all these mysteries I thank you:
for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works
(Ps. 139: 13-14).

Jesus promises a far deeper intimacy with every believer:

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood
lives in me
and I live in him (Jn 6:56).

All this mysterious and personal intimacy of God with an individual will be in a way not available to one if one has not the ghost of an idea of human intimacy. On the contrary he who has been led into the intimacy of the love of a friend by his side, is in some way open to the revelation of the personal love of God for him. Celibate friends can therefore find much en-

11. E. Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

couragement in their love being a living proof of the unseen depths of the closeness of God to them. Further this intimate love of friends contains and conveys God's own far more intimate love for them. This is expressly taught regarding the love of husband and wife: by their mutual self-giving in love they imitate and share the very love of Christ for the Church and in particular for each one of them (cf. Ep. 5:2, 24, 25). This symbolic and real truth about married love may be extended to other relationships of love. Did not Jesus say to his disciples:

just as I have loved you,
you also must love one another (Jn 13:34b).

Therefore, when two friends love each other they do so with the love Jesus has for each one of them. That is why the love between friends can make them not only recognize God's personal love for them but also lead them to believe firmly that they will receive from God an even deeper experience of his intimacy.

Celibate friends may get a further insight into the reality of their friendship by asking what the practice of celibacy that fights shy of heterosexual friends imports. A suggestion may be that this kind of celibacy is akin to the crude idea of celibacy that some developed from the words of Jesus on those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:12). Origen for instance castrated himself taking the Lord's words literally. Nowadays there are people who castrate themselves not physically, but psychically. Celibates who frown all friendly relation with the opposite sex do no less than that! Such practice of celibacy has nothing to recommend itself as it is a deviation of the nature of man. One may not be far from right detecting in it a shadow of homosexuality. The life of Jesus has nothing to show that his celibacy meant the severing of loving relationship with women. One need not labour this point. There is another aspect to the rigid practice of celibacy: restriction of dealings with the opposite sex is only one element of the vast network designed to save the vocation of people! Have we ever thought of what is at work in all this? This is an immense human attempt to make sure of the grace of celibacy within the four walls of a religious house. But no grace can be obtained by human work, especially the work of the kind that

hinders, or at least does not favour, the free exercise of human freedom. The grace of celibacy is a free gift of God. God alone can grant it to who he wills, as Jesus himself said: "It is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted" (Mt 19:11). Those who are persuaded of this will find no reason for living in a world only of their own sex! They will live in a world of the sexes as created by God, with the certain knowledge that the sexes are no less a gift of God than celibacy and with the firm assurance that the relationship of love between the sexes, far from being contrary to celibacy, does indeed enhance it.

We can go one step further, combining celibacy and love between the sexes, and discovering a profound meaning in celibate love between the sexes. The meaning of celibate love is bound up with that of celibacy. The meaning of celibacy rests on the revelation of Jesus that celibacy is for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Celibacy expresses the nature of the kingdom and is a true sign of it. It represents on the earthly level the beginning of the reality of the kingdom, namely, the life of the resurrection without the necessity to procreate. It is being in harmony with the kingdom in anticipation. Therefore it advances the advent of the kingdom among us.¹² Celibacy however is not the only trait of the kingdom, as Jesus himself points out that the spirit of childhood, poverty and obedience are also marks of the kingdom (cf. Mt 19: 13-26; 20: 20-28).¹³ One would like to think that community of men and women with God is also an essential characteristic of the kingdom.¹⁴ This idea is presupposed in the solution of Jesus to the controversy with the Sadducees on the resurrection of the dead (cf. Mk 12:18-27). In the newness of the resurrection men and women will be like the angels in heaven. Luke explains this comparison of men and women with angels in terms of immortality (cf. Lk 20:36a). However, the comparison, unexplained by

12. Cf. L. Legrand, *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity* (London, 1963), pp. 44-46.

13. Cf. my article "The Threefold call" that will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Review for Religious*.

14. Thomas Aquinas speaks of our companions in beatitude in his treatise on charity. Cf. J. Pieper, op. cit. p. 120.

Matthew or Mark, can refer to the sexlessness of the angels and thus point to the heavenly relationship of men and women in which sex will play no part. This however does not mean that men and women will become asexual in heaven, as this will be a denial of the resurrection. The relationship of men and women in heaven can therefore be thought of only in terms of love, without the least shadow of genital sex. For mutual love alone does not come to an end (cf. 1 Co 13:8). This heavenly reality of love of men and women in the kingdom is beautifully symbolized on earth in the celibate love between the sexes. Thus celibate love is a more adequate sign of the kingdom than celibacy itself! The love of Mary and Joseph exemplified this truth preeminently, with Jesus, the bond of their love, making the kingdom visible in their midst!

Discovering celibate love

How can a celibate strike such a heavenly friendship with a person of the opposite sex? If one were to concentrate on looking for a matching partner of the opposite sex, one is doomed to frustration and failure. What is important here is not waiting to get hold of a beloved of one's heart, but of developing the capacity to love those near just as one who wants to learn drawing begins drawing objects within his reach without waiting or searching for the best. When one does show oneself a loving person, one cannot fail to call forth love from others, among whom one is destined to find a few most beloved to oneself. All learning in life and for life proceeds in this way: one never forces oneself but always presses on hopefully till one's dream comes true, or as it happens at times, till one comes by undreamed-of blessing.

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Guidelines for Celibate Friendship

Celibates who wish to cultivate friendships, especially hetero-sexual ones, will do well to abide by the following guidelines in their own interests and those of their friends.

A. Awareness of risks

The friends must be aware of the dangers and hazards that are present in heterosexual friendships. 1) Human nature being weak, it is not wise to go beyond a certain limit. Every meeting between people of the opposite sex, especially when there is mutual attraction, builds up a forceful dynamism within the persons concerned. In the beginning little signs of affection may satisfy the lovers, but as the relationship develops there will be deeper urges which may culminate in the desire for final union of body and spirit, namely, for marriage. Good intentions may not help and the parties may not know where the friendship will lead them. After discussing the nature of their relationship, two young people, for instance, may decide in their minds that they will not overstep the bounds. But the inner dynamism may push them into the direction of marriage and married life. Perhaps they may discover that the barrier they set, has collapsed.

Sin has affected man from the beginning. It would be foolish to think that one could be immune from it. The consequences of sin continue from generation to generation. They war against the spiritual core of man and prevent him from opening his mind to truth.

2) A time may come when friends become aware of their genital sexuality. This can cause tension. Celibate men and women should be aware of the powerful physical urges which will appear in intimate relationships. Platonic friendships normally are of short duration. It is better for the two people to be

aware of these possibilities because when the force of nature is felt they can face it calmly. This can be done through an honest admission of physical attraction and through dealing with these urges in the right manner.

St. Thomas has said that because we are human, a human act is more perfect if it is accompanied by a natural reaction. If natural reactions in love direct the will, they will lead a person to sin, but not if these reactions come from a rightly loving will (*ST I-II*, 24, 3).

In all heterosexual relationships there is an urge towards genital sexual expression. Hence it is difficult to achieve a mature loving relationship. All celibates, especially the young persons, need to face the difficulties and risks involved very honestly. Only keen discernment and maturity can help to overcome these risks.

Generally speaking, the pressure for genital sexual satisfaction is felt more by men than by women. Younger celibates will have to struggle harder than elder celibates. Many priests and religious have a particularly hard time in their middle age. A celibate should be absolutely honest in such a friendship and should remind himself constantly of his celibate consecration.

3) The highly sexy atmosphere in which we live today has also to be taken into account. For a person whose sexual urges have either been controlled or have subsided, this atmosphere might be a help rather than an obstacle in the sense that the coarse and monotonous way in which sexuality is depicted all around is repelling. But even here there can be the danger of a person being rendered insensitive to the role of sexuality in the context of higher human values. Psychology of commercial advertisement shows that what is either ignored or taken for granted exerts a powerful influence on our subconscious. In these days when it is difficult to escape the wave of sexual stimulation, even the one who thinks he is immune from it has to be very vigilant. Otherwise it may blunt his conscience and make him condone minor transgressions in the sexual realm and finally he may land in dangerously intense temptations.

4) The celibate should have a high degree of self-knowledge. He should be aware of his sexual urges and desires and of his tendency to have his vanity fed or ego satisfied through companionship with a person of the opposite sex. To counteract against failures in his apostolate he may feel the need to appear important to one person. These are not necessarily obstructions in the way of a healthy friendship but the awareness of these risks is a prerequisite for it.

5) The danger of forgetting God cannot be discounted. Psychologists agree that sudden and consistent demands for personal fulfilment may lead to a loss of interest in the spiritual realities. The need for personal growth in friendships may become all-consuming. Concentration on one's immanent perfection may adversely affect the transcendent values of life. A friendship which may be ennobling at one moment may wipe out all religious interests at another.

6) The risk of losing one's celibate vocation is another one among the risks in heterosexual friendships. Love can lead to a denial of celibate vocation. There have been many instances when love for a woman has made men break their vows and *vice versa*. Even though these failures prove that here we are not dealing with genuine celibate love, still the risk is to be seriously considered. This, however, does not destroy the beauty of love.

7) The obvious risk of genital sexuality does not threaten everyone equally. Different people react differently to situations that can arouse genital sexuality. We can say without hesitation that, generally speaking, consecrated celibates must avoid exposing themselves to stimuli that are commonly considered to be physically provoking. Everyone is obliged to avoid situations that are directly sexually stimulating. Presupposing a certain growth in the virtue of chastity, each one has to find out which situations are under his control and which are not. The minimum requirement of prudence demands that the celibate should avoid proximate occasions of violations of the vow of celibacy. He must take care to purify himself of self-seeking and to be inspired by benevolence rather than by self-indulgence.

B. Deep prayer life

It is presumed that celibates who seek heterosexual love are deeply prayerful persons. Otherwise such a love would create a dangerous situation.

1) God must be *the beloved* of the celibate. His personal relationship with God should be the most important thing in his life. In the life of a mature celibate all other relationships are to be sustained by his personal relationship with the Lord. Theologically speaking, there is no value in celibate life unless the relationship with the Lord occupies the central place in it. Since consecrated celibacy is a theological reality, its value is founded on God alone. The celibate's relationship with God should be so strong that it can cause a reorientation of his whole life. Men and women have their existence in God. Most of them reach Him through the intimate human relationship called marriage. The celibate gives up this kind of relationship to respond to a more intimate sharing with God.

This fundamental fact must be understood before we can understand what should or should not be in friendships between celibate person of the same sex, or the opposite sex. It is only when we know of their relationship to God that we can understand how they are to relate to one another. An authentic celibate friendship should thrive in God. As St. Paul says, whatever we do, even the ordinary duties of the day, we do to the glory of God (1 Cr 10:31). Celibate friendship should be a love that is poured down by the Spirit of God. To each partner in the relationship, God should remain the first concern. This means that the partners are persons of deep personal prayer. They should not be satisfied with mere liturgical prayer, but should be convinced of the absolute importance of contemplative prayer and be trying to grow in it.

2) The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, is the Spirit of divine love. It is He who loves through us when we love others in the Lord. But unless we allow Him to do so, He cannot love through us. He will come into our hearts, only when we invite Him, long for Him, beseech Him and depend wholly on Him. Unless we are docile to Him we cannot rely on

Him to do our loving for us. It is only those who abandon themselves completely to the Holy Spirit in prayer and heed His promptings who can love others in Christ.

3) One who wishes to become a celibate lover must live a deep and enduring life of contemplative prayer. Unless he knows that he is loved and cared for by God, he cannot really love and care for others. We can love others because God loved us first and because of His love we can love them as He loves us. The multiplicity of our relationships with others cannot make up for the lack of this love of God. Unless we have, we cannot give.

A Christian prays in order to let God love him. It is through prayer that our awareness and conviction that God loves us, deepens in us. This deepening will enable us to move towards a world which needs to experience that love incarnated in human beings. We receive God's love in prayer and then we show this love to others in our relationships.

The crux of the whole question of celibate friendship is prayer. Those who write on this topic and talk about it outside the context of prayer are not dealing with the root of the problem. Only those who through prayer, are in close communion with God, the source of love, are capable of deep friendships. To put it concretely, a person who is not willing to spend at least half an hour a day in contemplative prayer does not seem to have the credential for heterosexual friendship.

4) St. Paul reiterates again and again that all relationships with others, especially between close friends, must be "in Christ Jesus". As Christians we have to bear this in mind. The personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the foundation on which all other relationships should be based. Christ will then teach us how to relate properly to others. He alone can teach us how to love with His own fulness (Eph 4:13).

5) The human capacity to love and to be loved, is very great. No mere human being can satisfy it. It would be unfair to expect a human being to give the love that only God can give. When a man and a woman place their love for each other within the context of their love for God, it is a definite lessen-

ing of a heavy load. It is then that they can see the wonders that human love can do. The response, the concern and loyalty towards each other, will then be a matter of jubilation and gratitude.

No human being can be the final completion and fulfilment of another. It is only God who can be the ultimate THOU of a person. A marriage, for instance, which expects this role from a human partner will only meet with disappointment and frustration. The Christian who knows that his emotional urge is much greater than can be satisfied by another human being, does not expect or ask for more than what the other can give. The love relationship with God, thus, must be the basis of stability and strength for the love relationship with human beings. When a person realizes that no human being can take God's place, or be God to him, then, he can really love other persons. It is only in God's love that the Christian can love others. It is God alone who can give the love we need and receive the love that we need to give.

6) Prayer helps to dissolve all doubts and uncertainties about love. We cannot be definite about human love because we are never quite sure whether it is right or safe to give or accept love. Whether given or accepted, love is risky and to some extent we are afraid to take the risk. Love is indispensable to human life; yet, it is an experience both joyful and sorrowful, constructive and destructive, healing and hurting.

In prayer Christ is able to remove all the uncertainties of love. Divine love is the ocean into which all the confused streams and currents of human love are drawn. This makes a new relationship possible. Christ is the one sure guide who can establish the right standards of friendship. The more the celibate learns through prayer, and to look for this guidance, the better he will be able to enjoy human friendships. When the communion in love is in Jesus, from Jesus, and with Jesus it remains spiritual, ardent, and devoted. When completely anchored in Christ, the I-Thou relationship of friends will remain pure, without any genital shade coming into it. At the same time, it will be the fulfilment of spiritual interchange between a man

and a woman. Christ creates holy tenderness in a human being who willingly subjects himself to His influence in prayer. He gives strength to keep order and choose only such modes of expression of love which are God-directed.

7) God has shown us that loving is possible and worthwhile. We have to know ourselves, our own worth, to have the courage to get out of our own selves and to love others. We must believe that we have something to give to others, and receive from others. When a child is loved by his parents, he realizes his own worth, that there is something in him that is worthy of being loved. Each time we are loved, we become conscious of our worth. But it is God's love that is the firm foundation on which we can build a mature self-image. This self-image will enable us to be brave enough to offer and accept love. God's love for us proves that we are worthy of love. To each of us He offers a personal relationship with Himself in Christ.

God's love guarantees the personal worth of others also. We realize that God appreciates every person. It is in the light of this realization that we should approach our fellowmen. By raising Jesus from the dead, God has shown that love is life-giving. Loving even unto death, as Christ did, is the only way to live for oneself and for others. The risen, living, glorious Christ who is with us and for us shows that the life which He promises will be a life of total loving, of perfect love, and that by loving as He loves, we are hastening the coming of His kingdom. All this is experienced more profoundly in prayer.

8) Though we are urged by God to love all our neighbours, it is God's will that we have a few close relationships. There is a particular kind of closeness in the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, friend and friend. These relationships are entirely different from the relationships we have with others. These intimate relationships bring joy and happiness, but occasionally, they also bring frustration, anger and even anguish. It is only prayer that can give us the light and strength to face difficulties in these relationships. When we are tempted to flee from the sufferings of close relationships, it is prayer that can help us.

C. Knowledge of the difference between authentic and inauthentic friendship

Is it possible to know if our friendship is genuine or just a delusion? What are the criteria of true love? If there are no criteria to guide us as we try to love others, it would be easy to give to any emotional urge the name of "love". The quality of our love can be judged only by the quality of the life that it produces.

a. Authentic friendship as working for the total good of the other

A good friendship desires and works for the total good of the other, while a bad friendship works only for his partial good. To understand the difference between the total and the partial good of a person, we must first analyse the human personality.

In the first place, a human being is a spiritual reality. So his spiritual good must take priority over all other things. Next, he is a social being, and so, next comes his social good. Thirdly, he is an emotional being and so his emotional good comes next. As he has a physical existence, besides the other three, his physical good also has to be taken into consideration. When a friend wills and works for all these goods, giving of course, the first place to the spiritual good, he works for the total good of the other. If either the physical or the emotional good is the main consideration, the friend works only for the partial good of the other. The physical thrill of loving is permissible provided it is not given the prime place in the scale of values. Friendship is not cultivated merely for the spiritual good of oneself or of the other.

A total and integral love that works for the total good of the other has various qualities. Firstly, integral love is not self-centred, but other-centred. Genuine human love is a warm emotion that reaches out to, and cares for another person whether human or divine. It responds to, and accepts the other as the object of love. It desires the good of this person, and is willing to do whatever is possible to achieve this. There is no doubt that the lover expects love in return. But primarily loving

is giving, not getting. Love always puts the other before self. Love is something deeper than the satisfaction of self-centred desires.

Love includes a reaching out from the self towards another. To love someone is to will good to him. There are two elements in love, namely, the good that is willed and the person to whom it is willed. If one wills the good for himself, in Thomistic terminology, it is concupiscent love. It is the desire for the possession of some good for oneself. On the contrary, if one wills the good of another, it is generous or benevolent love. When there is this benevolent love between two persons there is friendship.

Concupiscent love can be of two kinds, the delightful love and the useful love. In the former, the friend is not loved for himself, but for the pleasure that he provides. In useful love, the person is loved for the good he can do to the one who loves. He is loved for his usefulness. These are not friendships in the real sense, because the friend is not loved for himself, but for the pleasure or the usefulness coming from him. Once the pleasure or usefulness stops, the friendship also will come to an end.

Benevolent friendship is the only true friendship. There may be mixed motives in forming a benevolent friendship. There can be a true and benevolent friendship with an admixture of useful or delightful love. In this case it is the benevolence that predominates.

It takes a really virtuous person to be a true friend, because only a virtuous person can love unselfishly for the other's sake. The more a person is virtuous, the greater his capacity for true friendship. It is in our human nature to manipulate others for our own advantage and to delude ourselves into thinking that it is real love. A young man who loves a young woman may believe that the gratification of his own desires and urges constitutes love. The lonely young woman who finds the companionship and attention of a young man pleasing, may mistake this emotional satisfaction for real love. Experience shows that several celibates mistake closeness for love. When

the closeness disappears they are surprised and disappointed. This kind of friendship can be called need-friendship. Two people may be mutually attracted or find themselves interested in each other. Eventually they find that they meet each other's need for attention, warmth and understanding. Thus the need-friendship is formed. This need-relationship is not bad in itself, but it is not love. Genuine love between the sexes is not common, but need-closeness is. Real love demands complete self-forgetfulness.

Satisfaction of an appetite does not make friendship selfish. When a person does something he wants to do, it gives him pleasure. What is important is the kind of things that give pleasure. Both the good man and the bad man find pleasure in what they do. The difference between them lies in the kind of action that produces pleasure. The good man finds pleasure in doing good and the bad man in unjust deeds. The former finds it painful to do what the latter does, and *vice versa*. The pleasure or pain of an action depends on the nature of the doer. The pleasurable is determined by the suitability of an object to one's interests and the suitability of the object depends on the interests of the individual. Because the interests can vary, moral education should discourage selfish interests and encourage unselfish ones. If a man takes unselfish interest in another, it is one of his good interests and not one of his selfish interests. The fact that it gives pleasure should not be counted against it.

Whether the act is selfish or unselfish, pleasure is not the ultimate object of it. Pleasure implies that the desire is already there. It may give a person pleasure to have a nice cup of tea, or to comfort a child, or to have an article published. Because he desires the object, it gives him pleasure in the attainment of it. It is not pleasure that I seek when I help a needy person. If I get pleasure in doing that service it is because I have accomplished what I wanted. The moral problem lies in the kind of self that is satisfied.

It is only natural that when we do anything worthwhile we fulfil ourselves, develop our powers and become useful to society. The happiness we get out of human love is based on

its mutuality. Each recognizes something in the other. Through benevolent love, one leads a balanced and happy life. The human need is for unselfish love. The search is for another human being who will return this love and complete it.

It is hard to believe in a love wherein the lover seeks nothing for himself. When we give ourselves wholly and unreservedly to another we are unselfish, but not unselfish in the sense that we don't expect anything in return. The desire of the lover is not merely to possess the beloved, but to be possessed by him. We possess when we are possessed. Hence friendship is an exchange relation. We give because we want. We give ourselves to enhance the other's happiness and we want him to give himself in return so that our happiness may be full. Our happiness and that of our beloved are closely intertwined. Friendship assumes that it is greater happiness to be together than to be separate. We make the other happy and his happiness makes us happier.

Secondly, genuine love is built on respect. Love and respect are bound together. Love should be self-respecting and other-respecting. When a celibate loves, he must respect himself and the other as true celibates. A love that cannot maintain this respect is only passion.

To respect is to preserve the integrity of the other. The other is a definite person with a definite personality. His worth and his inner freedom should be kept inviolate. Chaste love is a wide concept. We cannot believe that we love chastely merely because we do not abuse another person bodily. Chaste or respectful love is deeper and more comprehensive than this avoidance of bodily domination. Genuine love is being respectfully present to the other by honouring his dignity, integrity and his right to privacy. Non-violation of the dignity of the other is the basic principle of authentic human love. Its absence is productive of the greatest harm.

The celibate must realize that often a loving respect for the friend is expressed through the keeping of a distance in regard to his innermost being. Unless one is invited to share it, one should keep this distance. It is only this distance that will guard him from spoiling the life of the other in the name of well-meant love.

Mature love preserves the integrity not only of the beloved but also of the lover himself. Unless there is self-respect in love, there is no power of loving. If the one who loves sacrifices his integrity, it is lost to both the lover and the beloved. Naturally it means that the lover has less of himself to give. Therefore it is imperative that a celibate should guard his innermost self from others and that his personal opening up should remain a mystery.

Thirdly, true love helps the partners both morally and spiritually. There is something special in Christian love because Christ Himself is the source and means of this love. Because it loves through Christ, Christian love reaches beyond this life into the eternal. At the heart of Christian loving is the eternal welfare of the loved one. It realizes that the greatest harm that can come to a person is sin, and the separation from Christ that sin implies. Therefore when a Christian loves he wants his loved one to be brought closer to Christ.

Real intimacy with another human being is rooted in God. It will always seek to develop and protect the other person's inner dimension. By doing so, it enables the other to grow both in humanness and in the love of God. Real love realizes that God has the first claim on a person. Real love considers it a sacred responsibility to see that nothing comes between the loved one and God. It gives itself wholly to protect and cherish whatsoever is beautiful, real and holy in the loved one.

Any relationship that leads to sin or a guilty conscience is not true friendship. True love always seeks the good of the other. This good is never found in sin. True friends have to be each other's conscience keepers. There may be occasions when a timid soul, over-anxious to keep a friend, or too faint-hearted to disapprove of wrong, unwittingly approves or does things that he would never have dreamt of doing himself or asking others to do. There may be times in our lives when we may be requested under the guise of friendship to do things that trouble our conscience. We should have the courage to resist it. By doing so we will save not only ourselves but also our friend. All friendships have, finally, to stand before God's judgment.

By putting certain questions to ourselves and answering

them we can find out if our love is authentic or not. Am I sensitive to the genuine needs of my friend? Do I put his welfare first or do my needs claim priority? Do I respect my friend? Do I look on him as one who will share eternal life with me? If his eternal salvation is my chief concern, then my love is good.

b. Authentic friendship as community-building

1) Real love grows beyond the present state of its development. It is not something that involves just two individuals only. On the contrary, real love reveals to the two friends the whole world around them. The experience of true love will enable a person to love others more than before. True love is something which keeps on reaching out. It destroys barriers and brings more and more people into its fold. Genuine love shows itself in warmth of feelings for the whole world. Each partner in true love finds that he feels more cordial, friendly and helpful to all who come in his way.

Celibate love should never be exclusive. Since Christ is at the heart of true celibate love there will be a personal love for all those with whom a celibate comes into contact. Intimacy can be had only with a few, but the effects of this intimacy can be shared with many. We should ask ourselves some questions. Has this friendship made me more sensitive to others? Has my knowledge of human strength and weakness through my experience of this friendship made me more sympathetic to people and has it given me a better understanding of them?

2) In a bad friendship there is selfishness. The two become so inseparable that there is jealousy if either takes an interest in a third person. They feel that their friendship should be a means of pleasure and satisfaction to each other only. They exclude other members of the community from their interests and concern. They have praise and excuse only for each other. They are preoccupied with each other even during prayer. They absent themselves from community prayer and recreation repeatedly. Often they stay up late at night for the so-called "depth sharing" and thereby losing necessary sleep. They do not have any time for the community but only for each other. While it is true that friendship takes up time, this exclusive

preoccupation with each other, this spending of time only for each other, is not healthy. A healthy friendship respects the feelings of others in such a way that they will not experience discomfort in its presence.

c. Authentic friendship as productive of duty-consciousness

1) A good friendship stimulates activity. When we are accepted by another person, there is produced in us a feeling of self-confidence which unites the various dimensions of our life. The knowledge that we are valued and appreciated spurs us on to nobler efforts.

2) Friendship becomes problematic when it takes us away from the important duties of our life. If a friendship with an individual were to affect the commitment to ministry adversely, it would certainly be unhealthy. Friendship is dangerous when it obstructs the fulfilment of one's important duties. It would be well if we asked the following questions in this regard. Does this friendship make me careless with regard to my vocation? Does it distract me from my work or the service I can render to others? If it does either of these or both, then it is not a good friendship. But if we discover that we feel more fulfilled in our work and that we become more loving and sympathetic than before, we can be thankful to God for the friendship we enjoy.

d. Authentic friendship as enhancing prayerfulness

1) Of decisive importance in determining the goodness or badness of celibate friendship is its ability or inability to promote personal prayer. If a friendship were to eat up the time set apart for prayer, it would certainly be counterproductive. True friendship influences our prayer life positively. Whatever we consider worthy and appreciable in a friend should make us aspire to similar worthiness and thus draw us nearer to God. If the thought of the other suggests to a celibate the thought of God and helps him to a deeper experience of God, it is a chaste friendship. In a virginal friendship the conversation and correspondence will also be concerned with God and His affairs. When the friends can pray together, the beauty of the friendship is enhanced. It is imperative that friendship should be

beautified by prayer. Both friends may not be equal in prayerfulness but they should have an appreciation for contemplative prayer and they should be willing to practise it. When a friendship produces loss of interest in contemplative prayer, it is dangerous.

2) Celibacy is chosen in order to give oneself to God in prayer more often and for longer time and with greater intensity than married people can who are burdened with the cares of family life., If a celibate does not spend more time for personal prayer than he would have, if he were married, he is blocking his own choice of celibacy from coming to complete fruition. In fact he is going back on his own promise to God, namely, to spend more time and effort to grow in prayer.

3) Friends who realize that their friendship is rooted in Christ because it is their love of Christ that has drawn them together, will constantly pray for each other. They will pray for the temporal as well as for the spiritual welfare of the beloved so that he may be perfected in the love of Christ. Their whole relationship will be nourished by prayer, and their love will lead to each other's sanctification.

4) Only in God can men make the deepest contacts with one another. No one can fully recognize and enter into real relations with his neighbour unless they both seek their source and centre which is God. It is God who brings friends closer together in love, and true friendship can be found only if they are both moving towards the mystery of God. Brotherly love cannot exist unless there is an opening up to Him who is in us all and who opens us up to each other through the deepest that is in us.

5) The depth of our friendship is proportionate to our prayer life. Contemplative prayer opens up levels of spiritual life that are normally not developed. These levels of spiritual or psychic life are what St. Teresa calls the "interior senses". She speaks of sensations like seeing, hearing, touching and embracing which are different from what we associate with them ordinarily. Other mystics too talk about tasting and enjoying the deeper realities in prayer. Whatever may be the terms they use, they are all trying to describe an aspect of psychic life which

most of us rarely understand because we do not live at a deep spiritual level of consciousness.

In the case of St. Teresa, these mystical faculties are active in her relationship with Christ. With the deepest faculties of her spiritual being she sees, hears and loves Christ. In human relationships also these faculties can be exercised. In the case of mystics it was so. Their intimate relationships with others were a prolongation of their contemplative experience. Because of this, when they related to others they could see, hear and touch them at a deeper level. There are many instances of deep relationships between celibate men and women in the history of Christian monasticism. There are a number of men and women mystics whose love for each other has been intimate and tender. These holy celibates lived at a time when celibate men and women were kept completely apart. This fact makes it all the more remarkable that they did cultivate deep friendships. Various external measures like enclosures, grilles and even canonical censures were resorted to, to keep them segregated. Man-woman communication outside of marriage was outlawed. But the mystics showed themselves to be remarkably ingenious in overcoming all these man-made taboos. It is these people who energize life dynamically and lead humanity into a bright future.

6) Sometimes thoughts of friends will creep in during prayer. That should not be considered a sign of bad friendship. It is only natural that during contemplative prayer, our minds should sometimes go to our friends also. These thoughts should not be considered as distractions. On the contrary, they should be made a part of our prayer and should help us to deeper prayer. When the thought of our friends dominate our minds during prayer, we can thank God for giving us those friends, and can pray to Him for the thousands who are friendless. From admiring our friends, we can pass on to admiring the One who has created them. We can pray to God that our attitude towards our friends may be like His attitude towards them.

Prayer becomes an uphill task when we try to close our minds to every thought except that of God. It is better to include everything into our spiritual life rather than exclude them from it. It is not necessary to concentrate on God in such a way as to shut out everything else. We should not set God up

in contrast to everything. That would create unnecessary problems and difficulties. God is not opposed to His creatures. We should strive to see God in His creatures and creatures in God. When we see the manifestation of God in everything we experience God's presence in everything and everywhere. Nothing then is an obstacle to God.

D. Knowledge of the difference between celibate friendship and conjugal friendship

Celibate love is different from marital love. Celibate love involves the spiritual, social and psychological aspects of sexuality. Marital love involves, besides these aspects, also the aspect of genital sexuality. The placing of genital sexuality at the disposal of love goes counter to the nature of celibacy.

1) It would be superfluous to say that in consecrated celibacy, sexual intercourse and anything that is directly connected with it are completely out of the question. Genital sexuality is entirely excluded from celibate chastity because genital sexual actuation is morally good only when it is significant and true. Genital actuation existentially means the complete, permanent and exclusive surrender of one person in love to another. It can be true and significant only when there is a relationship of complete, permanent and exclusive surrender in love to sustain it. If such a relationship does not exist between two persons, sexual intercourse would be an untrue act, and therefore unchaste. Now a consecrated celibate is a person who has freely and willingly renounced a relationship of complete, permanent and exclusive surrender in love to another person. So he has renounced also the proportionate sexual expression of this relationship, namely, sexual intercourse and all that is directly and proximately connected with it.

Even if the other person were to agree to the genital sexual expression it would still be morally evil for the celibate. When a person reveals the secret of his sexuality for the sake of intercourse without a permanent and exclusive commitment in love - which is marriage - his personality is degraded, because he becomes a mere means for the other's selfish enjoyment. It is accepting and giving a false mutual self-surrender. In marriage a person gives his personal sexual secret to another in

a real and final surrender because marriage is a permanent love union. But outside of marriage a person who does so is just throwing away his personal secret to another for a temporary physical satisfaction. Conjugal love, which is exclusive and permanent, is the foundation on which the genital expression of sex is to be based. The sexual act is a unique way of giving oneself to another. It effects a union which is of the most fundamental nature. If it does not accomplish this, it is both betrayal of oneself and that of the partner.

The performance of the sexual act in marriage - the state of permanent and exclusive love - is a holy union of two human beings into one. It is the expression and fulfilment of a lasting bond which can never be dissolved. It is a mutual surrender of selves and involves the mutual revelation of the deepest personal secret. It is fundamentally an act that expresses a union of deep, permanent and exclusive love. The sexual act loses its sublimity if it is indulged in for its sensuous pleasure alone and when it does not serve its purpose as a function which manifests delicate love between a committed man and woman. In such a case the persons concerned corrupt themselves and make their spirits subservient to their flesh.

It is only a particular kind of love that can sublimate genital sexual expression. This love must be formally approved and sanctioned by society. Genital expression can be considered ennobling and chaste only in wedded love. It is only in such a love that the genital expression of sex becomes a positive experience.

In brief, for a celibate, indulgence in sexual intercourse is unlawful for various reasons. First and foremost there is the possibility of pregnancy and the consequent loss of reputation. Then there is the guilt complex, betrayal of one's ideals and the morality of the Gospel, the loss of virginity that has been promised to God. But the main reason is that sexual intercourse symbolizes and embodies an indissoluble and exclusive commitment of love for life. Since the celibate has freely and willingly renounced such a commitment of love for life, sexual intercourse loses its meaning.

2) The sexual act, in the context of conjugal love, is a fulfilling and personalizing experience. As an expression of celibate friendship it would be a depersonalizing experience. Married people feel greater love for each other and feel prouder of each other after a sexual encounter. But after such an event a celibate would only feel ashamed of oneself and guilty.

3) Sexual intercourse, if indulged in by a celibate would only destroy love. It would not be an expression of genuine love. According to St. Paul, physical union in marriage is a sign. In marriage the two become one flesh. This symbolizes the perfect union of the human and the divine in Christ. In a celibate who has no right to the exclusiveness of marriage, the union of friendship is a reminder that it is not the union between two human beings that is final, real and most satisfying, but the union between God and man. For this reason celibacy as a sign demands that physical union be renounced.

In marital love physical presence is an experience of union while physical absence is an experience of separation. In celibate love the case is different. The celibate experiences union both in physical absence and in presence. The true celibate experiences separation when he is constantly physically present to his friend. When they are absent from each other they can experience real union.

4) Celibate love is neither "half-way conjugal love" nor "Third Way", as it is called. The "Third Way" is a kind of combination of celibacy and marriage. There is the physical intimacy of marriage but not its commitment. Anything from a dubious friendship to uncommitted sexual intercourse comes within the bounds of the "Third Way". It often means that the two friends try to enjoy an exclusive relationship with each other in which all the physical expressions of love, not excluding mutual masturbation, are indulged in though they may stop short of sexual intercourse.

There are only two clear-cut and definite vocations, namely, marriage and celibacy. The "Third Way" which is a kind of married celibacy is a myth. The history of Christian celibacy has witnessed several instances of deep friendships

and love between the sexes, but it has never approved of the "Third Way".

5) Celibate love includes sexuality in the generic sense. Some sexual factor is always present in a relationship especially with members of the other sex. The consecrated celibate should know and accept this fact. Just because a celibate takes the vow of chastity he does not cease to be a sexual being. A woman, for instance, will always be a woman and hence her love will have sexual nuances. In everything she does she will reveal herself as a woman. Divine love does not destroy sexuality. Christian education should aim at the purification, perfection and guidance of human nature through the love of God, and not at its destruction.

We have to recognize the fact that, to some extent, affectionate love is sexual. It is so because we love as men and women. Our love for those of our own sex is different from our love for those of the complementary sex. Father-love and mother-love are not the same. A father's love for his daughter is different from that for his son, just as a mother's love for her son is different from that for her daughter. A brother's love for his sister is different from that for his brother. The same is true of a sister's love for a brother, and a sister. There is difference between friendship of women with women and that of men with men. A man-woman friendship is, of course, different from either, and different on the part of both.

Affectionate love grows out of human sexuality. Therefore, all affectionate friendships have a sexual coloration. Human love is rarely without sexual attraction. There is no point in pretending that the senses are excluded from the love between a man and a woman. Such a pretention would be liable to illusions which are positively harmful.

Affectivity has been badly maligned in the past. Religious people tended to suspect all emotions and passions. Scientific minds brought everything they could not understand and analyse under the label of "subjectivism". Rational philosophers considered emotions part of man's baser nature. It is indeed fortunate that there are contemporary philosophers who have reconsidered and reappraised the affective life.

It is supremely important to accord just appreciation to affectivity. It is only then that we can tackle the task of being human. Religious dedication renders this all the more imperative. Religion is meant to make us "more than human" and it certainly cannot achieve this by ways which are "less than human".

Feeling is not purely subjective. It makes a person turn towards the world. The specific characteristic of feeling is that it returns to the subject and makes him realize the existence and meaning of objective realities. As a consequence, feeling makes reality something personal. In abstract knowledge this reality is something impersonal and external. Feeling brings to the subject things and persons kept at a distance. Feeling also interprets their meaning for him and shows him through experience, his place in the realm of reality. Feeling is not the enemy of knowing but its fulfilment. Affectivity is not a trait of animal nature, but the peak of the specifically human nature. In short, feeling reveals the fundamental meaning of being a human self.

One of the contradictory factors that has influenced the lives of many is the association of love, sex and sin. When Christ asked His followers to love one another, He did not issue any warning or place any restrictions. Neither did He place any conditions on love. He just directed their attention to the fundamental need of human nature. No one can become mature without feeling love. It is not enough to be loved but one must feel that he is loved.

When some persons talk of the need of friendship they seem to talk about a kind of remote and disembodied love. But such a love is not human love which should be the characteristic of men and women. When feelings enter into love, some people fight shy of them. They feel a kind of check, something that holds them back. They fail to see that as human beings they have to have feelings and that without them they cannot function as humans.

Emotions are not independent realities. They mingle and merge and overflow. In human closeness, it is not possible to segregate feeling of affection and love into separate compartments. In the whole range of human relationships, affection and

love are part of an individual's make-up. Feelings are a part and parcel of generic sexuality. Celibate friendship is not an abstract spiritual love, but a deeply felt human love. It would be impossible to think of a relationship that is "purely spiritual" among human beings who are interpersonally related to each other. Even the most spiritual relationship is bound to have emotional overtones. There have been countless religious teachers, nurses and missionaries whose services have been the outcome of dedicated love. But even this love cannot be characterized as purely spiritual. Their tremendous work can only be explained as the expression of human feelings guided by the grace of God. The total consecration and commitment to God merely refine human sentiments so completely that their sensitivity becomes very keen and sharp. When this happens, they become capable of giving themselves unreservedly for others. Love is not mere emotion, but without the emotional element, human love is not perfect.

Since a celibate is a human person, his love must be warm. His love must be visible because his love is of an embodied spirit, and not of a pure spirit. Any being can only act true to its nature. As a celibate is a human being, he can only love as a human being. Human love is born in the spirit, but revealed through the body. Affectionate love is no more than love incarnate. A celibate as the child of Adam loves properly only when he loves affectionately.

Christ was an affectionate person. He called children to Him, and embraced them, only to show His warm love for them. We are told that He looked with love on the rich young man which is the same as saying that He looked at him affectionately. He loved Lazarus, and openly wept at his tomb. He who could sternly rebuke the Pharisees when it was necessary, corrected Martha gently by repeating her name twice before admonishing her. The epistles of St Paul, St Peter and St John are full of expressions of love and concern. These men could not have learned to love affectionately except from Christ.

Our Lord wants the Christian to be identified by his visible love. As St John's gospel puts it (13: 34-35) men shall

know that Christians are His disciples if they have love for one another. It was His new commandment that His disciples should love one another, as He loved them. Affectionate love is visible. Cold love may not be seen even if it is expressed through deeds. A love that is not warm does not draw men to itself as Christian love should.

The Bible is the story of God's great love and tenderness for the human race. God broods over us, as a lover does over his beloved. In Isaiah 49:15, God is compared to a mother who can never forget her sucking child. Even if she were to forget, God would not. In 54:6, God is like the husband who yearns for "the wife of his youth". In 62:15, He is "like a young man marrying a virgin" and rejoicing over her.

One of the most beautiful and precious human qualities is tenderness. Unfortunately, our past attitudes have been affected by fear of the flesh, puritanical depreciation of sex, strict suppression of emotions, severe avoidance of all delicate feelings and suspicion of all tokens of love as being unspiritual. Nowadays there is a healthier approach to tenderness. There is a greater readiness to consider our capacity to love one another as good and as a God-given quality.

Anti-affectivity is not a virtue. Jesus does not want us to subjugate entirely all our feelings and emotions. He experienced all the emotions common in human nature, and at the right time and in the right context expressed them unhesitatingly. He never showed stoic indifference. The sole aim of consecrated celibacy is to make a person free to love, as Christ loved. The vow of celibacy does not demand that affective impulses be repressed, but that these be made divine by God's grace.

It is now evident that sexuality is an inevitable element in loving, even when there is no orientation to conjugal love or physical union. Sexuality is not the total content of love even though it has a definite place in all categories of love. There is no need to feel unduly apprehensive at the idea that sexuality is an ingredient of affectionate love. Sexuality does not mean just genital sexuality. It has generic aspects. There is no doubt that elements of generic sexuality permeate and influence every

aspect of the human personality, particularly its most noble manifestation, namely, love.

E. Sufficient affective and sexual maturity

The outcome of a friendship between a man and a woman in celibate life will depend largely on their affective and sexual maturity. At least one of the two should be affectively mature, or have made progress towards it. If the two involved in the friendship are emotionally mature, it is almost certain that the relationship will enrich both of them at all levels. Given sufficient sexual maturity, the heart of the consecrated celibate will easily remain undivided and will be filled with greater love for men. A friendship should not become so vital and essential a need that both the friends are engrossed entirely in it. They should accept it as a gift from God in their endeavour to move towards the kingdom of heaven. For the emotionally immature, friendship can lead to great misfortune. It would seem as if Christ's words in Luke 12: 26: "I tell you, to everyone who has, will be given more, but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken" were quite apt to this particular condition.

When there is intimacy there is a sharing of one's identity with another. It is inadvisable to take the risk of intimacy if one is not perfectly sure of his own personal identity. Without maturity, one's identity would not be secure enough to risk being shared with another in love.

a. Nature of psychosexual maturity

Psychosexual maturity enables a person to enter into easy dialogue with persons and things, without any unhealthy or unnecessary inhibitions. There is neither undue anxiety nor aggressiveness or possessiveness in a person who is sexually mature. Philip Chistantiello lists the following factors of psychosexual maturity.¹

1) *Value system*. In psychosexual maturity there is a balanced and agreeable interplay of the individual's psychological and

1. Philip Cristantiello, "Psychosexual Maturity in Celibate Development", *Review for Religious*, 37 (1978) pp. 650-654.

sexual capacities within a value system that is well ordered and ethical. Behaviour is determined by choice and choice should be made only after consideration of values. Hence psychosexual development is related to the influence of values. Therefore we cannot speak about maturity in a person who is not committed to genuine values.

An individual grows towards maturity when he is able to evolve for himself a particular value system. While recognizing the personal reality of his sexuality, such an individual will also try to develop a sexual ethic. The maturing person, while discovering the power of his biological capacities, appreciates their value and understands their meaning. He is mature enough to be responsible for the use he makes of them. He has the freedom to make his choice and he realizes that he has to commit himself to fundamental values. This freedom to choose what he considers valuable and worthwhile strengthens him and leads him towards maturity. He has now left adolescence behind him and is on the threshold of adulthood.

2) *Generativity*. In all celibates who are actually guiding and enriching the lives of their contemporaries we can see a generative capacity and power. The psychosexually mature celibate keeps his creative powers alive and uses them in a way the world can see. His creative powers are used to serve others.

3) *Love*. The relationship between people of opposite sexes is more a response to their good qualities than a more physical attraction. This attitude makes the celibate to direct his sexuality to something beyond genital expression. His sexuality enables him to be mindful of the sexuality of others. It also gives him an insight into things and an ability to understand them. Without this he would not be able to express his celibate commitment in the proper manner. This means that he is able to have and acknowledge the attraction between himself and a member of the opposite sex without being motivated or compelled by genital sexuality. At the same time he experiences his genital sexuality without being burdened by guilt complexes. Any physical contact, a touch of the hand for example, is only meant as a way of conveying warmth and affection, and not to excite any physical sensations. Psychologically he is intimate with men and

women but there is no domination, possessiveness, jealousy or genital expression.

4) *Awareness.* A person's mental life cannot be separated from his physical functions and powers. A mature celibate is able to understand and draw conclusions from the effects of his sexual responses. When he, as a celibate, responds to situations, he is not merely conforming himself passively with a pattern of behaviour. He understands well what he has chosen and accepts it without complaint or bitterness. In the absence of psychosexual maturity a celibate will find celibacy a bitter imposition.

5) *No compensatory processes.* The right level of maturity is not attained if a celibate is preoccupied in thought or in behaviour, with compensatory processes. There are certain ways in which he can find compensation for the lack of genital expression. They are, for instance, vicarious participation in the heterosexual experiences of the laity, psychic over-involvement in the conflict about celibacy in the lives of celibate candidates, taking too much care of one's physical appearance, running down the pleasures of genital expression in marriage, etc.

6) *Acceptance.* A celibate's psychosexual adjustment can be judged from the way in which he tackles his limitations regarding sexual expression. Gratification or frustration of sexual instincts has perceptible effects on one's emotions and behaviour. For example, an individual may experience sexual abstinence as frustration, that is, as a lack of lawful opportunity to get the desired pleasure. It may be experienced as deprivation, that is, as an unjust denial of pleasure. Frustration produces a sense of sacrifice, while deprivation, a sense of being deprived of some pleasure. The difference between these is something that will affect the celibate's response and behaviour. Frustration will lead to his accepting the situation and deprivation may make him indulge in secret gratifications which are apt to produce mental, emotional and spiritual conflicts.

b. Some practical implications

1) It takes time and effort to acquire sexual maturity. Unless there is a certain amount of sexual maturity, a celibate cannot have a fruitful friendship. If one keeps striving for sex-

ual maturity, one is on the way towards mature, celibate chastity. There may be difficulties and even some mistakes, but these need not deter him. Celibate chastity, like married or single chastity, has to be learned. This learning is a continuous process which demands great courage and perseverance to go on inspite of even occasional mistakes and weaknesses.

2) It is to be noted that although some maturity is required for friendship, friendship itself can help in acquiring maturity. Even people who are mature in other fields and brilliant in other matters may not have acquired sexual maturity. Further, there are mature celibates who are quite holy and who have never experienced the intimate love of someone of the complementary sex. These persons have not chosen a less mature way. Sexual maturity does not necessarily demand intimate friendships.

3) Even a mature celibate may run risks in the face of heterosexual friendships. Physical urges may tend to express themselves as in marriage. Two friends can be so much absorbed in each other that they develop an exclusiveness which is proper only between two persons before marriage. A greater danger lies in one person trying to use the other for the gratification of psychological needs that are either suppressed or are subconscious.

Under the pressure of emotions it is possible to justify or rationalize even unrealistic, silly and harmful actions. In the name of love many wrong things are done. There are celibates who delude themselves into thinking that certain physical actions are not incompatible with celibacy.

Honesty is of absolute importance here. Honesty with oneself is a mark of maturity. A honest person will ask himself questions such as these. Does this relationship affect my freedom for the kingdom of God negatively? How does it influence my relationship with others? What are my attitudes to my partner in love? Does this friendship produce more happiness for both?

4) A mature celibate is prepared to meet the legitimate demands of his friends. He resists imprudent and unlawful demands. When we place certain limitations on our friends, we are

demanding from him respect for our personal integrity. We yield ourselves in authentic love, when we yield ourselves with dignity and integrity. But if we surrender our integrity, privacy and freedom, we become sub-human.

There are two kinds of demands. The first kind sets us free and helps us to realize ourselves more fully. The second kind makes us dependent and hinders us from being fully human. We must ask ourselves frequently whether the demand that comes from our friend is of the liberating or of the enslaving type. If our friend requires authentic surrender we must yield, even though it may be painful. If his demands should make us less human, there must be polite refusal. Only a strong sense of one's own self-hood can resist and reject neurotic demands, without rejecting the friend who makes them. It may not be easy to say "no" to the other's demands, especially when he looks to us for support. Nevertheless it is absolutely imperative that we say "no" to such demands.

F. Self-discipline

1) Self-control is essential in any relationship based on love. This is particularly so in love relationships between celibates. Self-restraint is based on respect for the other, and for his sensitivity. As Christians, we have to deny ourselves for others and as such self-gratification is the last thing we should think of.

2) A sense of responsibility is the most outstanding characteristic of lasting and creative love. This places on friends a discipline of its own. Discipline is not so much self-denial as a way of expressing love. When a celibate restrains, for instance, a desire for physical union with his friend, he shows respect for his integrity. Love has great power. Whether this power is used for good or bad depends on the self-discipline of lovers.

3) When one loves in Christ, there is neither possessiveness nor grasping selfishness. Those who love have no property rights over each other. They belong to God, who in His great generosity has only lent them to each other. They must be ever willing to relinquish anything if it is God's will.

4) True friendship is not acquired easily or cheaply. It is only through the purification of oneself from jealousy, hatred, possessiveness and selfishness, that one can hope to develop a reasonable detachment. This self-purification is a "must" for intimacy. True love has a purifying and detaching power. This purifying process of love has a parallel in the man of the gospel who willingly sold everything to acquire the hidden treasure in the field. In friendship, the treasure to be acquired is the central core of the other, the secret of his personality. When we love this core, we are willing to renounce things that are less worthy.

5) Man has been created to love God and the creatures. But in traditional spirituality, these two loves seem to be opposed to each other, as though love for the creatures should make love for the Creator impossible and *vice versa*. If there is any truth in this attitude it is due to the fact that often we are not able to love properly. While loving, our hearts tend to lose their equilibrium under the weight of smothering possessiveness. They cling so tightly to the creatures that the Creator is often forgotten.

Not infrequently man becomes a slave to the love of wealth. Even zeal for work can be full of selfishness. Some people love work so much that they cannot abstain from it even when they ought to. They are obsessed by goods and profits and thereby make their own lives miserable. Selfishness is not absent even from the love of study and research. In these and similar cases, evidently, creatures are opposed to the love of the Creator. This is true also of friendship. Unless we guard ourselves against the danger of obsession in loving others, love can ruin us. A great deal of jealousy and selfishness can get into love. Blind devotion to another will cause the loss of peace, serenity and perception.

Because of this love is to be purified. Purification of love means that it is freed from the chains of the senses and pleasure-seeking. It is very difficult for us who are affected by sin and selfishness to free the gift of love from its alienations. We do not realize the depth of our own wickedness.

We are not criticizing here the selfishness of those who relentlessly pursue wealth or of those who try to achieve their goals at any price, or of the dictators who desire what is exclusively God's due. We are thinking of the selfishness of those who are good and devout. It is not rare that through spiritual practices and mortifications, they claim before God that they are not like the rest of men. This is a spiritual egotism which does not hesitate to use even piety for its own purpose.

Self-deception has no limit. It is such a slippery path that often it becomes necessary for God to employ harsh measures for bringing us back from it. Very often illnesses and disappointments may have to be resorted to by God in order to open our eyes. Pain is the fire that purifies the gold of love. It removes all that is unworthy and leaves love true, real and pure. It removes the mask of pleasure from love and makes it a free gift. When a person passes through the fire of pain, all that is false is burnt and only what is genuine remains. It is at this stage that a person becomes capable of the free gift of love.

G. Prudence and a sense of realism

Celibate friendship calls for great prudence. Prudent people exercise discrimination in judging persons and events. They understand what they are and what they should do. Only he is considered discerning who shows the ability to pinpoint important details, see subtleties and is precise in his observation. Discernment implies qualities of perception, discrimination and judgment.

Aristotelian and Thomistic prudence judges actions, basing itself on experience. Now that history has progressed so fast, this kind of retrospective prudence is not enough. The present situation has often no precedent in experience. We do not know what the future holds for us. So real prudence today is a prospective virtue. Aristotelian prudence needs to be completed by the theology of 'time', the *kairos*, to make it workable. The *kairos* is a particular moment when God reveals Himself to man and invites his generous response. The pressure of events and the rapidity of progress are so overpowering the man of today that he has hardly any time to ponder over events and turn them into ex-

perience. To a certain extent, experience itself has started losing its value because facts and realities are ever changing. Situations are new. Solutions that were once good are no longer so.

Some practical hints can be proposed here. 1) There are people who acknowledge and demonstrate their love publicly. They react immediately to their deep feelings. But often these reactions may be more an expression of their feelings than a prudent acknowledgement of what is good or bad. There should be discrimination as regards the values that need to be expressed. There should also be discernment regarding the possible consequences of certain actions. If such a discernment exists there would be little trouble in friendship.

To be more specific, a celibate should see to it that his friendship in no way comes in the way of his witness to celibate chastity. He should remember that whatever he does will influence positively or negatively the appreciation that Christians and non-Christians have for Christian virginity. Besides being really chaste, a celibate must appear to be chaste to the people around.

2) If the friends are living in the same place, a degree of separation is to be maintained. Absence and separation should be potent means for the expansion of celibate love. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of distance and even absence for the promotion of the true meaning of genuine friendship between persons who are dedicated to God. Celibacy by its nature implies separation between those who love each other. This separation helps the growth of friendship by giving it a new dimension in so far as it does not have to rely on physical presence for its existence and growth. Hence celibate friends should not worry about the fact that infrequent visits and other direct contacts will weaken their friendship.

3) A celibate should always see that no harm comes to the personality of the partner in friendship. The other may feel over-attracted and may get emotionally entangled, especially if he does not have the same spiritual resources to keep the friendship on a prudent level.

One should not raise hopes in the friend which he is not able or permitted to fulfil. To captivate another's heart unnecessarily is to hurt him. It is not only physically that one can make love to another. A celibate who will not do it, can still make love by sending gifts, tokens and paying such marked attention as will arouse strong feelings of attractions in the other. It is unfair to allow a woman, for instance, to fall in love with you, or worse still, to encourage her deliberately to do so, just to satisfy your ego, unless you are prepared to return her affection in a proportionate and fitting way.

4. Prudence demands that we avoid tempting and provocative situations. We must realize that if young people of the two sexes are thrown together in intimate and private circumstances, they will easily be tempted to indulge in caresses that may ultimately lead to sexual union. However moral a person may be, there can be moments when his self-control may snap. It is important to see that the warmth of psychic intimacy does not sink into genital intimacy.

This does not mean that a celibate should feel embarrassed if sexual feelings are present in a relationship. Neither should he shy away from a friendship that is healthy because suddenly or gradually sexual feelings intrude into it. He should understand that the unavoidable temptations are sent by God to test him to greater freedom and to draw him closer to Him.

H. Basic contentment in celibate life

1) Love for Christ should be the most important preoccupation of a celibate. Human friendships should take only a secondary place in his life. Love for Christ should animate even his affectivity and passions. When he loves in this way, he will find that love for Christ itself becomes a passion. This is the only way in which he will be able to find basic fulfilment. Prayer is the medium through which his love of God is expressed. Hence it must be frequent, intense and affective. Otherwise human friendship is apt to turn against him.

2) The celibate must have complete freedom of action. He should detach himself from the world. It is as though he is in the world, but not of it. Although he has uninhibited, intimate

conversation with men, he is always ready to withdraw from it at the slightest indication from God. The glory of Christian life, especially of Christian celibate life, consists in this that it promises an abundantly rich life. It includes everything that is good and satisfying in human life. At the same time it keeps a vigil of love, ready and alert for the trumpet sound of the coming of the gloried Lord, waiting to hear His loving voice.

3) God is faithful and He expects us to be faithful too. Celibacy is a free gift of grace given permanently. Both celibacy and genuine friendship are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Since God cannot contradict Himself, when He gives the permanent gift of celibacy with one hand, He cannot take it away with the other, while giving the gift of friendship. Hence if a consecrated celibate were to seriously consider seeking freedom from his vows in order to marry, his love would not be proceeding from the Holy Spirit. Celibacy is only strengthened by a genuine friendship which wants each of the friends to be more dedicated and faithful to his vows.

4) The life of celibacy should be one of joy. The celibate sees that the married state is good and that in giving it up, he has made a definite sacrifice. But he does not regret it. He is perfectly happy about his condition because he does not feel the lack of anything. He is able to rejoice over a young couple who have formed a loving union.

5) Every man and woman owes faithfulness first to Christ. If fidelity to Christ is not given the primary place in the love between a man and a woman, this love can only be lust, and the human personalities in this love will degenerate into mere playthings.

The deepest dynamism in us is our thirst for love. Every human being feels that love is the whole of life. The great question is as to who is the object of this deepest dynamism. God alone is fit to be this object for He alone can satisfy man's need for love completely. It is only His love that will never exploit our weaknesses.

There is absolute joy only in God. That is why lovers who seek a mystical delight in their friendship are sadly mis-

taken. The one who seeks a perfect love from human beings is chasing a shadow. There is absolutely no human love that is all-satisfying. Even in the most perfect human love, namely, married love, there is a certain amount of hunger and yearning. We are never satisfied with the love we receive or that we give. This inability to give fully causes acute pain especially in generous persons. Human love is limited because such is its nature. Its subject and object are human. Its means of expression and duration are limited. All these cause pain to the lovers, for every human love is far below a delight that is supreme and all-embracing. The celibate's need for love can fully be satisfied by God alone.

6) If celibacy is experienced as a burden, the celibate will easily fall into temptations. Today priests and religious have great freedom of movement and generally speaking they can meet whomever wherever and whenever they like. The barriers, if any, are only those which they themselves decide to place. Only a deep love for the Lord can safeguard their celibate vocation in these circumstances. The unequivocal and unconditional attachment to the Lord is the only protective barrier that can keep them from falling into crisis.

7) Once a celibate's love for God turns cold or even lukewarm, his life has lost its purpose. Such a life turns out to be a chain of mere existence, following of rules and regulations, activism, meals and also, undoubtedly, of frustration. The celibate life is not meant only to provide a place to live, a place where we come for satisfaction of our bodily needs, a place which provides financial security and freedom from the cares of family life. Consecrated life would not amount to more than this if a celibate were to wait for another human being to satisfy him basically.

When we are dissociated from the true centre of our lives, we will try to manage with the second best. False friendships which sincere married people would not even dream of will be accepted as relevant and valuable. Activities which are unsuitable to the consecrated life will be seized upon to escape from monotony. Unrealistic day-dreams will start haunting us, until perhaps one day we apply for dispensation or appear with our partner at the civil court.

8) The celibate should avoid a neurotic need for love. The way this need is revealed may vary. Some may make a show of their own life. Others may exhibit their own weakness with the deliberate intention of rousing the other's sympathy. Some others may make use of threats, and even go to the extreme of threatening to leave the consecrated life or to resort to suicide. Although the forms of manifestation may be varied and complex, all those who resort to these strategies show an unhealthy and unwholesome need to be loved and recognized. This type of people are incapable of true friendship. They are only using the other as a tool. If a celibate is to love genuinely, he should establish relationships because he chooses to do so rather than because he feels a compelling need for them.

If we understand the relative values of gratification and privation, we will be able to find a solution to the difficulties of love. Nobody has an absolute right to the gratification of the need of love from specific persons, while we may say that privation is an inevitable part of our imperfect condition. Gratification is a privilege that relieves the monotony of life. We cannot expect perfect gratification of love just as we cannot expect perfect health. Therefore with diligence and forbearance we must accept the happiness that is given to us as our share. We must also realize that this share depends on the quality of what we offer to others.

9) The celibate should be discreet in deciding which of his heterosexual acquaintances should become intimate friends. For instance, he may be acquainted with some married women who consider their marriage vows as something sacred and solemn. He may also know women who take them lightly and are probably even thinking of breaking them. While he should be sympathetic to both of these categories, he would better choose as his close friends from the first category. Similarly there are sisters who are contented in their consecrated lives and others who are not. He will deal with all these lovingly, but he would select his close friends from among those who are contented. This applies also to celibate women in their relation to men. The celibate must be selective with regard to close friendships. Close association with those who feel depressed and

lonely are more risky than with those who are happy and contented. The latter are more likely to respect commitment to celibacy.

I. Non-exclusiveness

Celibates should be careful to see that their close friendships do not tend to be exclusive or total. For various reasons it is advisable to form more than one meaningful heterosexual friendship.

1) Celibate loving is an open loving and hence it is better to have more than just one friend. Marriage is an exclusive relationship because sexual union can be had meaningfully only in a unique relationship. In marriage two people give themselves to each other in a union of heart, mind, and body. It is not possible to have this kind of relationship with more than one person. A person can form only one such union which is a union of mind, heart and body at the same time. On the other hand, this exclusiveness is not required in a spiritual union. Conjugal love is directed to one person alone, though married people can love others with a general love. Their love relationship with each other is so singular that neither has any room in his heart for any other similar relationship.

Celibate love is not directed exclusively to one person. In celibate friendship, one or a few may be the object of special love, but because there is no bodily union each is free of and free with the other. It is a mutual self-gift but it can be shared with others. True celibate love enables a person to love many others at depth precisely because of his first experience in loving. The celibate perceives the high worth of all and so grows in the love of all men and women. This love is a reflection of God's love. A celibate who is capable of having only one close friend lacks something of the love of the Spirit of God. He who gives all his love, energy and time to one person only, does not approach friendship in a manner worthy of consecrated celibacy. Any one who touches the life of a celibate should be drawn into his love which is not limited by the dutiful love to one's family.

2) Celibate friendships are strong and healthy only when they are part of a wide spectrum of relationships with others. The celibate must be ready to allow his friend to offer his love to anyone who may need it. This will save him from the temptation to monopolize the love of the other. Cultivation of friendships with many lessens the danger of concentrating all love on any particular person and also that of being more drawn to him physically.

Exclusiveness and infatuation are the characteristics of inauthentic celibate friendships. Two friends are fascinated in such a way that they spend their time day-dreaming about each other, thereby neglecting their duties. They isolate themselves from others and maintain a distance from them. In a kind of pseudo-intimacy they play upon each other's neurotic needs. This keeps them from being intimate with others outside their particular group.

If this happens in their earlier years it need not be taken too tragically. Often it is due to lack of maturity that they form such partnerships. Many enter celibate life without ever having had the experience of falling in love. They go through this experience years after they enter celibate life. This can be a step taking them away from self-interest and leading them to genuine concern for others. Hence it would not be prudent to ask them to terminate the relationship. They must be helped to see the immature elements in their friendships and encouraged to transcend them. A friendship that may have started with immature infatuation can become mature and helpful.

3) Fostering of many and varied relationships prevents us from attaching such an importance to one of them as to make it into an absolute. Even in married life where the love is unique and has relative absoluteness, this approach is necessary. Idolizing another person, even if he is one's married partner, stunts the flowering of love.

4) It is becoming that a celibate passes on to many what he has learned from his one friend. This is on the credit side of the asceticism of celibate friendship. When this happy sharing is had, the pain felt by the ascetic nature of friendship decreases.

5) If God brings a friendship into his life the celibate must develop it generously. Since friendship among celibates is not exclusive, there should be no place for jealousy in it. The larger the number of friends involved in celibate life, the healthier it is. When one or both feel jealous of sharing their love with others they are not practising celibate love.

6) In spite of what has been said above, it is not advisable to form intimate and deep friendships with too many people. Celibate love must be selective since it is impossible to extend to every one the kind of love we are considering here.

7) It may be asked if it is possible to establish several deep friendships simultaneously. Is it possible to have more than one intimate friend of the complementary sex? Yes it is possible.

At the beginning of the love experience between a man and a woman, the two will be, generally speaking, so fascinated with each other that they may not be able to pay attention to the need of others for their love. On recovering from this fascination and returning to hard facts of life, they will be able to turn their interest also to others. A celibate should love in such a way that each of his relationships is unique and there is no clash among them. If there is a clash, the friends should ask themselves whether their relationship is healthy or not.

When celibate establishes friendships with different people at a certain depth, it becomes difficult to speak of one friendship being more intimate than another. Each friendship is so unique that there can be no comparison between them.

Tolstoy's heroine Anna Karenina tells her lover that every love is infinite and that she does not love him less because she loves her child. Each friendship is a unique meeting between two unique persons. My friendship with A will be different from my friendship with B and the two will not mutually interfere. When friendships are false they clash with one another. If I am intent on dominating A, I will not tolerate someone else attempting to do so. But if I am a genuine friend, I will be only happy if he has another friend. One of the glories of celibacy

is that it enables one to love deeply several persons with a uniqueness proper to each of them.

Love which is expressed genitally does not have this freedom because every such relationship is exclusive. Profound friendship with more than one person is possible only when there is absence of genital relationship.

It is clear from the love of a mother for her children, that non-exclusiveness is not at war with the depth of love. A mother's love for her children, we know, is very deep. Because there is no genitality in her love for her children, she is able to love all of them profoundly and uniquely. These various loves do not come into conflict with one another. Maternal love is so deep that if one child were to die, the vacuum thereby created could never be filled by the other children or even by a new child.

There is something that is unfathomable in every human being. No one is able to discover all the treasures contained in a human person. When more people love a person, more of his qualities come to light and begin to shine more brilliantly. Thus when the number sharing the friendship of our friend increases, we possess him more. Naturally to each, the friend will be a different person.

J. Pledged brother sister relationship

Until a celibate has a real experience in loving a person of the other sex, it is better to stop at pledged brother-sister relationship. This relationship between two persons who are not blood relations fulfils each of them and this should be adequate to meet their emotional needs. A brother-sister relationship is more safe with regard to celibacy than a deeper love that is possible in celibate life. If this relationship has enriched their life and made it more useful, then they may form a deeper relationship of love which is proper to celibate life. This friendship, evidently, is quite different from conjugal friendship.

In the love between a brother and a sister there is care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. Care means that there is active concern for the life and growth of the other. Responsibility

consists in the readiness to respond to the needs of the other. Respect allows each to grow and develop in all his uniqueness. Knowledge points to the deep understanding they have of each other. Similarly, a deeper celibate friendship is also caring, responsible, respectful and understanding of one another, but there is something more in it. In a deeper friendship the friends experience a special joy and mutual enrichment that is greater than in the brother-sister relationship. There is some sort of a melting of the hearts in a deeper friendship.

It is good to encourage officially pledged family relationships in consecrated life. Ernest Ranly, a missionary priest working in Peru, speaks about the beautiful custom among the Peruvians of pledged family relationships which could be introduced into consecrated life with immense benefit to all concerned².

One day two middle-aged ladies came to Father Ranly and requested him to bless their vow as pledged sisters! The two were loving each other since long. They felt that a pledged sister-sister relationship would be an effective antidote against the impending loneliness of their old age. So they wanted the missionary to officially bless their pledge to become sisters to each other. After studying their request diligently, Father Ranly blessed their pledged sister-sister relationship in an improvised special service. He asked them to join hands and he cupped their two right hands into his. Then he prayed to God, the common Father of men, who made us all one family in Jesus, to bless these two women who were promising to live as loving sisters to each other forever. He also prayed that God might grant them the necessary strength to fulfil the serious obligations they were undertaking. He gave the two ladies one last blessing. They embraced each other tenderly and solemnly. He congratulated them. A few close friends embraced them in congratulatory hugs. They left the Church as pledged sisters for life. Subsequently, Father Ranly has blessed a number of such pledged relationships, where a younger man pledged himself to be the son of an older man, two men became brothers, an old woman became the mother of a younger lady and a man and a woman became brother and sister to each other.

2. Ernest Ranly, "Pledged Family Relationships and Friendship in Religious Life", *Sisters Today*, April 1980, pp. 536-542.

We should be broad-minded enough to allow a religious sister, for instance, to accept another lay or religious woman as her pledged sister, a priest, brother or a layman as her pledged brother. A priest or brother should have a similar freedom with regard to men and women. There is no doubt that a lot of the emotional problems haunting the present-day priests and religious would be solved if such relationships were officially encouraged. What a comforting thought it is for a priest, for instance, to be assured that a loving sister is at his side to love, appreciate, cherish and support him! Let the day dawn when such pledged brother-sister relationships will be an ordinary feature of consecrated life which could be entered into at a public or semi-public ceremony.

K. Guidance by a third party

Those celibates who have formed heterosexual friendships should be willing to have a third party with whom they can discuss openly and candidly these relationships. There will be times when it will be difficult for the friends concerned to judge about the maturity of their own relationships. In such cases it will be helpful to have a third person who can view their friendships objectively. Friends need a spiritual guide when they are faced with spiritual and moral problems and a psychological guide when faced with psychological problems, for instance, if they have entered into a relationship as a compensation for their immaturity.

The third party may be any one who is mature, knowledgeable and open-minded. The superior or the confessor or the spiritual director could be this third party. If these persons are not sufficiently open-minded, a mature companion could be our guide provided he would not hesitate to speak out frankly even bitter truths about us when necessary.

When doubts assail us in the process of reaching greater depths of friendship, we need the help of a third person. The presupposition is that if we can openly and honestly talk about our relationships with a third person there will rarely be anything wrong in these relationships. In case the relationship is questionable, the third party would be able to give sound and objective advice since he is not personally involved in this relationship.

L. Spontaneous cultivation of friendship

A celibate should not seek friendship anxiously. After a sincere discernment of spirits a friendship that develops into intimacy is to be maintained and nurtured. It is necessary to continuously reassess the relationship to avoid the danger of being led into mere passion.

Generally speaking, close friendships should be the result of some work or apostolate undertaken together. They should be the spontaneous outcome of one's mode of life, hobbies, etc. Any celibate who makes it a point to go out searching for an intimate friendship is to be viewed with some suspicion. This, however, does not mean that a prudent effort at forming friendships should be suspect. We can pray to God to provide us with friends, and we can be on the look-out for the right time and opportunity to form prudent friendships. It is usually the male side that takes the initiative.

Some people believe that ministry and friendship should be kept apart because they feel that effective ministry would not be possible if feelings of affection came into it. It is feared that if such feelings exist, they will cloud our objectivity and that others might not feel free to disclose their problems to us. Moreover, if we give external expression to our affection, we may appear partial to some people.

There is nothing unnatural in a celibate experiencing special affection for some of the people he is serving, for example, as a teacher or a retreat master or a chaplain. The service will bring him satisfaction, not only because of the work he is doing but also because of the personal contact he has with the persons concerned. He will be drawn to them because they are people whose affection he enjoys, and for whom he feels genuine affection. They may even be the desire that the relationship with them were not limited to the service alone, but could be of longer duration. The satisfaction comes more from the relationship or personal contact with the people than from the service done for them.

At first sight it seems quite reasonable to say that ministry and friendship should be kept apart. But we can accept this view only with reservation. Although the feelings of affection could be a threat to the effectiveness of the ministry, they need not necessarily be so. If affection is a threat, the reason for it is not in affection as such. If at times affection can interfere with the frank discussion of problems, at other times, it can be a positive help in this regard. Where there is affection and trust it is easier to discuss problems because the sympathy that is generated as a result will sharpen the sense of perception. Affection for one or more persons may at times prevent others from coming freely to us for help. But in this case it may legitimately be asked whether we or they are immature. We should not forget that we have authentic personal needs to be met and that we cannot always render our service to everyone. What we have to do is to assess the whole situation and find out whether our friendship with one or with a few will harm our apostolate to many. If it does, evidently, friendship and apostolate should be kept separate, but not otherwise.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, people do commit mistakes in their endeavour to practise heterosexual friendship. But these mistakes are more often than not, due to ignorance about proper guideliness to follow rather than due to ill-will. All loving is risky. But non-loving seems to be more risky. Although deep heterosexual friendships in celibate life do run the risk of being thrown off their balance, prayerful and good hearted celibates who have attained a good measure of emotional maturity are able to cultivate love and friendship without becoming warped in any way.

Most of us have a legalistic view of Christian life and so we conceive of God as a task-master who sits above in the heavens and observes if His human creatures on earth are fulfilling all the rules and regulations to the minutest detail. But God is our loving Father and in Christ He has irrevocably committed Himself to be with us in every area of our lives. He is constantly with us when we love, helping us to do this loving more generously and humanly. In Christ he has granted us the radical power to break out of our selfishness and to love as He loves. We can learn to love as He loves only by loving and not by keeping away from love under the pretext of security.

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INDEX

to

JEEVADHARA 55 - 60 (Vol. X)

1980

Sl. No.	I. Index of Articles	Numbers	Pages
1.	Authority and its Exercise - Biblical v. Western and Oriental Perspectives J. C. Manalel	58	286-301
2.	Buddhism, The Sociological Dimension of Richard DeSmet	59	365-374
3.	Celibate Friendship, Discovering A. Paul Dominic	60	411-425
4.	Celibate Friendship, Guidelines for Felix Podimattam	60	426-468
5.	Chaldean Church, A Historico - Ecclesiological Development of the Geevarghese Chediath	58	269-285
6.	Discipleship according to the Gospel of John Mathew Vellanickal	56	131-147
7.	(The Meaning of) Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark Paul Savio Pudussery	56	93-110
8.	Discipleship in the Lucan Journey Narrative Paul Kariamadam	56	111-130
9.	(Aspects of) Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount Joseph Pathrapankal	56	148-158
10.	Evangelization, The Relevance of Bosco Puthur	57	175-183
11.	Evangelization, Truth and Manipulation Samuel Rayan	57	200-216
12.	Evangelization, A Letter and Some Comments Ambrose D'Mello & Samuel Rayan	57	230-245
13.	Ecumenism and Freedom Sebastian Kappen	57	217-229
14.	Jerusalem or Rome ? Thomas Vellilamthadam	58	302-315
15.	Liberation, Towards an Indian Theology of Sara Grant	59	389-403
16.	Life 'After' Death: Individual Survival or Universal Communion ? Abraham Koothottil	55	63-87

17.	Lord or Partner of the World? On the Need for a New Vision of Man-World Relationship John Arakkal	55	35-62
18.	Man, Towards a Dynamic Conception of André Cloots	55	17-34
19.	(Is) Man the "Result" of Evolution? Jan Van der Veken	55	6- 16
20.	Paul Disciple and Apostle of Christ Francis Pereira	56	159-166
21.	Pneumatology: Oriental V. Western, Horizontal V. Vertical John B. Chethimattam	58	255-268
22.	Puebla, The Achievement and Significance of John B. Chethimattam	57	184-199
23.	Salvation, Hermeneutics and the Worldly and Transcendental Understanding of Othmar Gachter	59	346-364
24.	Salvation and the Missionary Context of India John B. Chethimattam	59	375-388
25.	Salvation, Pauline Approach to the Concept of Joseph Pathrapankal	59	337-345
26.	(Statement of) Theologians at the I. T. A. Meeting Indian Theological Association	57	246-250
27.	Theologizing in India Today J. C. Manalel	59	333-336

Book Reviews

John Sobrino S. J., <i>Christology at the Crossroads</i> A Latin American Approach, trs. Joh Drury, Maryknoll, N. Y. Orbis, 1978 pp. xxvi, 432 J. B. Chethimattam	58	316-320
Alfred T. Hennelly, <i>Theologies in Conflict</i> , The Challenge of Juan Luis Segundo, Mary- knoll, N. Y. Orbis, 1979, pp. xxiii, 200 J. B. Chethimattam	58	320-324
Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, <i>Theology of a Classless Society</i> , Maryknoll, N. Y., Orbis 1980 pp. 159 J. B. Chethimattam	58	324-325
K. Luke, <i>Israel Before Yahweh, An exposition of Selected Psalms</i> , Alwaye: Pontifical Institutue of Theology and Philosophy, 1978 G. Kaniarakath	56	167

II. Index of Authors

Sl. No.		Numbers	Pages
1.	Arakkal, John Lord or Partner of the World? On the Need for a New Vision of Man-World Relationship	55	35-62
2.	Chediath, Geevarghese A Historico - Ecclesiological Development of the Chaldean Church	58	269-285
3.	Chethimattam, John B. The Achievement and Significance of Puebla Pneumatology: Oriental v. Western, Horizontal v. Vertical	57 58	184-199 255-268
	Salvation and the Missionary Context of India	59	375-388
4.	Cloots, André Towards a Dynamic Conception of Man	55	17-34
5.	DeSmet, Richard The Sociological Dimension of Buddhism	59	365-374
6.	D'Mello, Ambrose & Rayan, Samuel Evangelization: A Letter and Some Comments	57	230-245
7.	Dominic, A. Paul Discovering Celibate Friendship	60	411-425
8.	Gächter, Othmar Hermeneutics and the Worldly and Transcendental Understanding of Salvation	59	346-364
9.	Indian Theological Association Statement of Theologians at the I. T. A. Meeting	57	246-250
10.	Kariamadam, Paul Discipleship in the Lucan Journey Narrative	56	111-130
11.	Kappen, Sebastian Ecumenism and Freedom	57	217-229
12.	Koothottil, Abraham Life 'After' Death: Individual Survival or Universal Communion?	55	63-87
13.	Manalel J. C. Authority and its Exercise - Biblical v. Western and Oriental Perspectives	58 59	286-301 333-336
14.	Pathrapankal, Joseph Aspects of Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount	56	148-158
	Pauline Approach to the Concept of Salvation	59	337-345

15.	Pereira, Francis Paul Disciple and Apostle of Christ	56	159-166
16.	Podimattam, Felix Guidelines for Celibate Friendship	60	426-468
17.	Pudussery, Paul Savio The Meaning of Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark	56	93-110
18.	Puthur, Bosco The Relevance of Evangelization	57	175-183
19.	Rayan, Samuel Evangelization, Truth and Manipulation	57	200-216
20.	Sara Grant Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation	59	389-403
21.	Veken, Jan Van der Is Man the "Result" of Evolution?	55	6-16
22.	Vellanickal, Mathew 'Discipleship' according to the Gospel of John	56	131-147
23.	Vellilamthadam, Thomas Jerusalem or Rome?	58	302-315

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56 167

